



Department of Justice

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DAYTONA BEACH MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO
MAKING FALSE MAYDAY CALL TO COAST GUARD

Jacksonville, FL - Acting United States Attorney James R. Klindt today announced Zachary Ryan Werthem, a 23 year old resident of Daytona Beach, Florida, pleaded guilty to making a false distress signal to the United States Coast Guard. The maximum penalty Werthem faces is up to six (6) years' imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, up to three (3) years of supervised release, and a special assessment of \$100. A sentencing date has not be set and Werthem was permitted to remain on bond pending sentencing.

According to court documents, Werthem made a false Mayday call to the United States Coast Guard, which resulted in an unnecessary search and rescue operation that cost an estimated \$75,000. Werthem signaled the Coast Guard in Jacksonville, Florida on September 26, 2006, claiming he had a small hole in the bow of his boat and that his vessel was taking on water. In fact, Werthem was at the time using a marine band radio in a pickup truck in a parking lot in Volusia County. The Coast Guard searched an area of the Atlantic Ocean off of Ponce de Leon Inlet for more than an hour using vessels, aircraft and a helicopter.

This case was investigated by agents of the United States Coast Guard Investigative Service. The prosecution is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Dale R. Campion.